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ABSTRACT

Comprehensive school reform focuses on making coherent schoolwide improvements that affect virtually all aspects of a school's operation, rather than using a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program aims to raise student achievement by helping public schools across the country implement successful, comprehensive school reforms. The CSRD legislation promotes the use of reliable research and effective practices and emphasizes basic academics and parental involvement. The program provides startup funding to help finance the initial implementation of comprehensive reforms. The program is intended to demonstrate how Title I schoolwide and other funds can be used effectively to support a rigorous, research-based approach to school improvement, even if a school is not receiving CSRD funding. The document offers advice about launching a comprehensive reform effort, key steps for getting started, and nine key components of a comprehensive school reform program. It cites comprehensive reform attempted in the Memphis City Schools, which has been working to implement comprehensive school reform since 1995 through a partnership with New American Schools. (DFR)

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# Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

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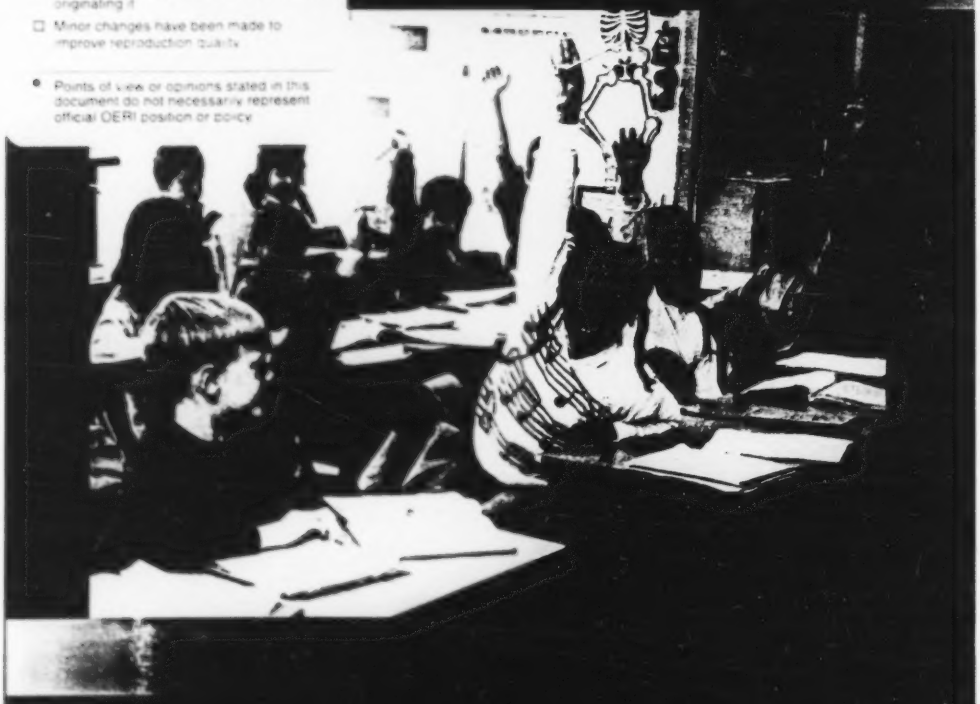

*Raising Student Achievement Through Research-Based Reforms That Strengthen the Entire School*

EA 030 449

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education



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## What Is Comprehensive School Reform?

Comprehensive school reform focuses on making coherent schoolwide improvements that affect virtually all aspects of a school's operations, rather than using a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform.

Research shows that an entire-school approach can be highly effective in raising student achievement. A strong schoolwide approach integrates curriculum and instruction, student assessment, professional development for teachers and staff, parental involvement and school management—all in a unified effort to help children achieve high standards.

***"It's very important that CSRD focuses on research-based strategies--everyone at the school is now asking critical questions. Working with our external partner has brought a new cohesiveness to what is being taught at the school."***

*—Teacher*

As part of a comprehensive reform program, schools use well-researched and well-documented models for schoolwide improvement. "External partners" from externally developed models, from universities or from other technical assistance providers help schools implement these models. Typically, external partners are teams of trained experts who provide on-site assistance to teachers and staff in using effective strategies for teaching and learning.

## The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, begun in 1998, aims to raise student achievement by helping public schools across the country implement successful, comprehensive school reforms. The CSRD legislation promotes the use of reliable research and effective practices and emphasizes basic academics and parental involvement.

In establishing the program, Congress and the president recognized the potential for the wider use of proven, research-based models for comprehensive school reform. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program builds upon and leverages ongoing efforts at the state and local level to connect challenging academic standards with school improvement. The CSRD program is increasing the quality and accelerating the pace of schoolwide reforms in high-poverty and low-achieving schools, especially schools receiving Title I funds.

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## CSRD in Action

Through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, states are awarding competitive grants to school districts for schools that are ready to adopt comprehensive reforms. By fall 1999, approximately 2,000 elementary and secondary schools in urban and rural areas will be using CSRD funds to support their schoolwide improvement efforts.

Each school participating in the program receives at least $50,000 of CSRD funds each year, renewable for up to three years. To qualify for funding, schools must integrate nine key components (see side panel).

The CSRD program provides start-up funding to help finance the initial implementation of comprehensive reforms. To fully implement and sustain the effort, a school must use all its resources —including federal, state, local and private. The CSRD program is intended to demonstrate how Title I schoolwide and other funds can be used effectively to support a rigorous, research-based approach to school improvement, even if a school is not receiving CSRD funding.

### Comprehensive Reform: A School and Community Effort

Memphis City Schools, an urban district in Tennessee, has been working to implement comprehensive school reform since 1995 through a partnership with New American Schools.

At Carnes Elementary School, for example, teachers provide intensive reading and math instruction through the Roots and Wings model, which emphasizes early intervention for at-risk students, ongoing professional development and family support. Also, Alton and Gordon elementary schools are using the Co-NECT model, which features the extensive use of technology, project-based learning and comprehensive assessment of student performance. Additional school reform models used in Memphis include Accelerated Schools, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, High Schools That Work and Modern Red Schoolhouse.

In these schools, which serve mostly low-income African-American communities, teachers work together to prepare students to meet state and local standards in core subjects such as reading and math. The efforts of teachers, students, parents and community members are paying off in Memphis: The 25 schools originally involved in the "restructuring" effort have shown greater gains in student achievement on the Tennessee state assessment than other schools.



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## Launching a Comprehensive Reform Effort

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program encourages schools to consider including successful, externally developed models in their comprehensive school reform efforts—models that are based on research and that have been replicated with proven results. However, locally developed reform programs that integrate the components of a schoolwide program and that have research-based evidence of effectiveness are also eligible for support under CSRD.

*"Comprehensive school reform requires hard work, commitment and teamwork on the part of teachers, parents and the entire community."*

*—Richard W. Riley*
*U.S. Secretary of Education*

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program funds are not intended to support separate projects that are "added on" to existing programs or projects in a school. Rather, the CSRD program assists schools in improving their entire educational operation through, for example, curriculum changes, sustained professional development and enhanced involvement of parents.

## Key Steps for Getting Started

- **Use data** to identify the school's needs through a rigorous needs assessment.
- **Learn about comprehensive reform** and school reform models.
- **Gain support** from everyone involved—teachers, parents, students and community members.
- **Develop a comprehensive reform program** that integrates the components in the CSRD framework (see side panel), uses research-based strategies with evidence of effectiveness in raising student achievement and addresses the school's identified needs.
- **Commit the time and resources** necessary to fully support the comprehensive reform effort (e.g., time and resources for in-depth, sustained professional development for teachers and administrators).
- **Plan to evaluate** your efforts regularly to track progress and make improvements over time.

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## Nine Key Components of a Comprehensive School Reform Program

Under the CSRD legislation, a comprehensive school reform program must integrate all of the following components:

- **Comprehensive design with aligned components.**
  - Provides a comprehensive design for effective school functioning, including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement and school management;
  - Aligns the school's curriculum, technology and professional development into a schoolwide reform plan;
  - Addresses identified school needs; and
  - Enables all students—including children from low-income families, children with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities—to meet challenging state standards.
- **Effective, research-based methods and strategies.**
  - Uses innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching and school management;
  - Is based on reliable research and effective practices; and
  - Has been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics.
- **Ongoing, high-quality professional development** for teachers and staff.
- **Measurable goals and benchmarks** for student performance.
- **Support within the school** from teachers, administrators and staff.
- **Meaningful parent and community involvement** in planning and implementing school improvement activities.
- **High-quality external technical support and assistance** from an external partner with experience and expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement.
- **Evaluation strategies** for the implementation of school reforms and for student achievement.
- **Coordination of financial and other resources** to support and sustain the school's reform effort.

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## Find Out More About Comprehensive School Reform

Visit the Department of Education's Comprehensive School Reform program Web site—

**http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform**

The Web site offers basic information about the CSRD program as well as links to other resources and publications that can help you get started, such as a searchable database of CSRD schools and profiles of school reform models.

E-mail staff at:
**<compreform@ed.gov>**

Or call the U.S. Department of Education at:

**1-800-USA-LEARN**

Contact your State Education Agency for details about the CSRD program in your state, including the application process and funding.

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